

Aug. 28 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1993

Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

August 28, 1993

On this day 30 years ago, almost a quarter million Americans gathered in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial to ask our Nation to uphold its founding ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity for all.

As he looked at the crowd, Martin Luther King, Jr., must have been inspired by what he saw: people of every color, united in mutual respect and common purpose, representing America as it was meant to be and as it must be. In the words of A. Philip Randolph, whose vision of a multiracial movement for social justice inspired this historic demonstration, those who marched on August 28, 1963, were “the advance guard of a massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom.”

Three decades later, we remember how far we have come on freedom’s trail, and we rededicate ourselves to completing the journey. As a son of the South, I have seen in my own lifetime how racism held all of us down and how the civil rights movement set all of us free. We must never forget the hard-earned lesson that America can only move forward when we move forward together.

That is why we rededicate ourselves to vigorous enforcement of the civil rights laws, to eradicating discrimination of every kind, and to opposing intolerance in all its forms. And we firmly believe that, as such visionary leaders as Martin Luther King, A. Philip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin understood three decades ago,

jobs and freedom are inextricably linked. Human dignity demands that each of us have the opportunity to use our God-given abilities, to support ourselves and our families, and to produce something of value for our fellow men and women.

In everything we do, we are guided by that vision of economic empowerment. That is why we have struggled to lift the working poor out of poverty. That is why we have struggled to expand the opportunities for education, training, and national service. That is why we have struggled to bring new jobs, new opportunities, and new hope to communities all across this country, from our smallest towns to our oldest cities. That is why we will spare no effort to provide every family in America with health care they can count on, health care that’s always there. And as we pursue the timeless goals of opportunity for all and responsibility for all, let us follow the example of those who marched 30 years ago and work together, regardless of race or region or religion or party.

As we honor the past and build the future, let us listen again to the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., “Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy . . . now is the time to make justice a reality for all God’s children.” Together, we can make that dream a reality. Together, we can make the country we love everything it was meant to be.

Remarks Prior to Departure From Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts

August 29, 1993

The President. Can you hear me? Good. Well, first of all, let me thank you all for coming. I’m astonished by this crowd, but it is what we have seen all week. I can’t thank you enough on behalf of all of us for the wonderful hospitality we’ve had here. My family never needed a vacation more, and it’s hard to imagine how this one could have been better. We are going home immensely grateful to all the people who

have been here, for your hospitality, your warmth, your understanding of the problems we caused on occasion and very much refreshed, renewed, and ready to go back to work for the American people.

We have a lot of work to do. We’re going to take up the health care issue, which I think is the most important thing out there facing our country right now and any number of other

things that you will read about in the days ahead.

I don't want to give a political talk tonight. I just want to tell you that, at a very personal level, this was a wonderful 10 days for us, and we are grateful to all of you. This has been a great time. This is a great family place. I wish everyone in America could see it, but at times I thought everyone in America was here already. *[Laughter]*

I'd like to ask Hillary to come up and say a word on behalf of our family, and I want

to thank you again. And we want to get out here and shake a few hands before we leave, but I want Hillary to say a word or two.

[At this point, Hillary Clinton expressed her thanks.]

The President. Thank you very much. Bless you. I hope we'll see you again. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:36 p.m. at the Martha's Vineyard Airport.

Remarks at a White House Interfaith Breakfast August 30, 1993

Thank you. Thank you very much. I want to once again, as the First Lady did, welcome all of you to the White House on behalf of Vice President and Mrs. Gore and Hillary and myself. We're delighted to have you all here.

We wanted to make this new beginning by beginning with a group of religious leaders from all faiths and parts of our country to come here today as we rededicate ourselves to the purposes for which we're called here.

I wanted to make just a couple of brief remarks. We've had an immensely interesting conversation at our table about some of the things which are dividing Americans of faith as well as those which are uniting them. I would say to you that I am often troubled as I try hard here to create a new sense of common purpose. All during the election I would go across the country and say that we're all in this together. Unless we can find strength in our diversity, our diversity of race, our diversity of income, our diversity of region, our diversity of religious conviction, we cannot possibly meet the challenges before us. That does not mean, in my view, that we have to minimize our diversity, pretend that we don't have deep convictions, or run away from our honest disagreements. It means that we must find a way to talk with respect with one another about those things with which we disagree and to find that emotional as well as the intellectual freedom to work together when we can.

A couple of days ago, when I was on vacation—let me say, the most important religious

comment made to me this morning was that several of you gave me dispensation for my vacation. You said I did not need to feel any guilt for taking a little time off, so I appreciate that. *[Laughter]* But I bought a book on vacation called "The Culture of Disbelief" by Stephen Carter, a professor at our old alma mater, Hillary's and mine, at the Yale Law School. He is himself a committed Christian, very dedicated to the religious freedoms of all people of faith, of any faith, in the United States. And the subtitle of the book is "How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion." And I would urge you all to read it from whatever political as well as religious spectrum you have because at least it lays a lot of these issues out that I am trying to grapple with.

Sometimes I think the environment in which we operate is entirely too secular. The fact that we have freedom of religion doesn't mean we need to try to have freedom from religion. It doesn't mean that those of us who have faith shouldn't frankly admit that we are animated by the faith, that we try to live by it, and that it does affect what we feel, what we think, and what we do.

On the other hand, it is very important that, as Americans, we approach this whole area with a certain amount of humility, that we be careful when we say that because we seek to know and do God's will, God is on our side and therefore against our opponent. That is important for two reasons. One is, we might be wrong. *[Laughter]* After all, we're only human. The